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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

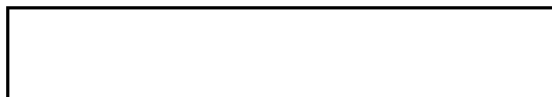
The Situation in Vietnam

State, USAF reviews completed

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Information as of 1600

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HIGHLIGHTS

Political pressures on Premier Ky from disgruntled southerners may soon lead to changes in the current assignments of some key northerners. North Vietnam lost two of its most advanced jet fighters in a battle with US aircraft on 5 November

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
US forces in Operation ATTLEBORO report significant numbers of enemy troops in the area (Paras. 1-3). Viet Cong overrun South Vietnamese outpost (Para. 4).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
Political pressure on Premier Ky from southern politicians is continuing, and may soon lead to changes in the current assignments of key northerners in the government (Para. 1). In addition to three dissident southern cabinet ministers who reaffirmed their resignations in a letter to the Peoples - Armed Forces Advisory Council, two other groups of influential southerners have also expressed dissatisfaction in recent letters which are rapidly becoming public knowledge (Paras. 2-5).

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III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:
US pilots downed two North Vietnamese MIG-21s on 5 November (Paras. 1-4).

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Surface-
to-air missile firings have increased markedly
since 4 September (Para. 6).

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IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: [REDACTED]

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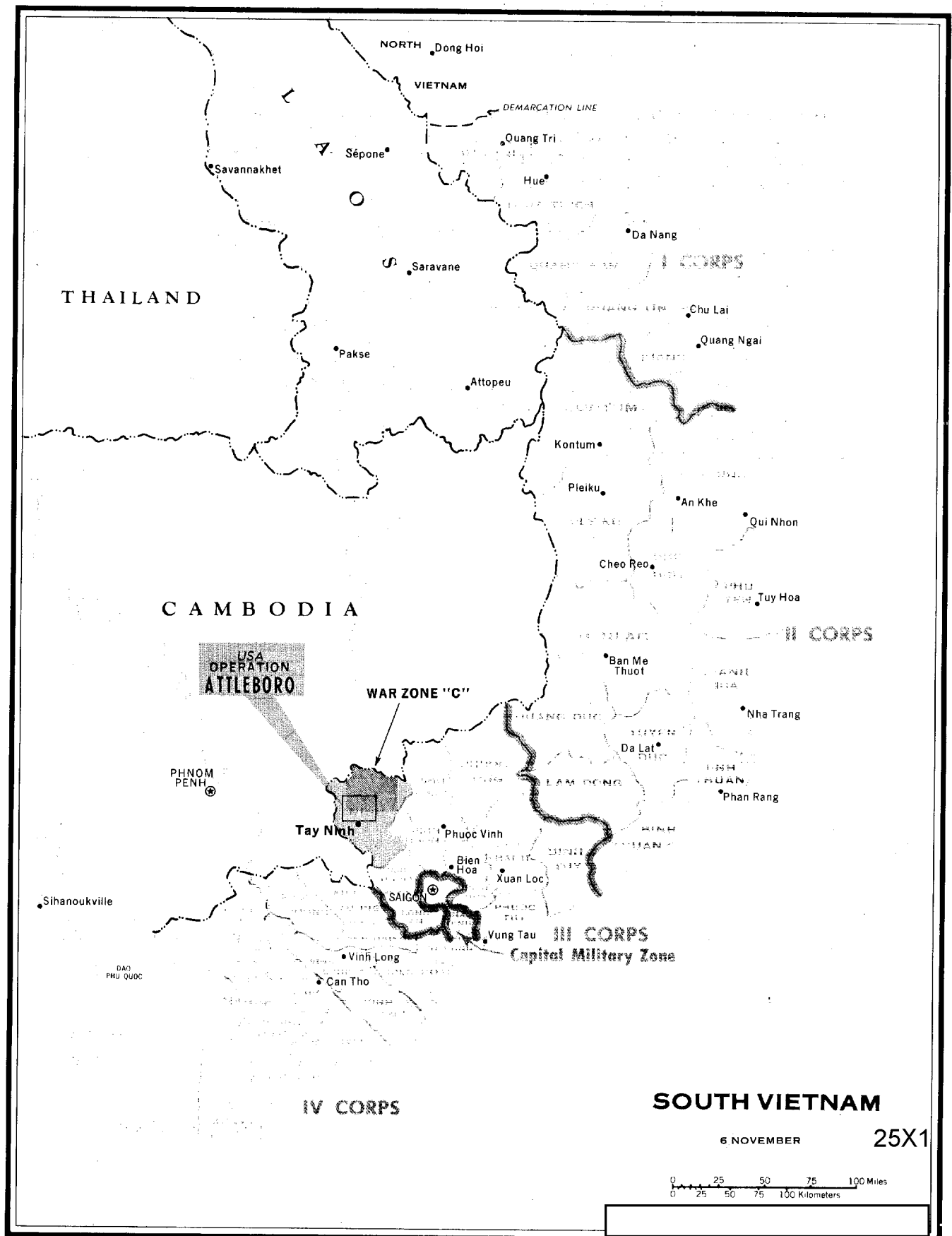
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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Additional reports have been received from
Eastern Europeans to the effect that the North
Vietnamese will respond to a cessation of US air
strikes (Paras. 4-6).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. US forces engaged in Operation ATTLEBORO continued to maintain significant contact with a Viet Cong force whose size and intentions are still unknown. Since the operation began on 14 October, 46 US soldiers and 401 Communists have been killed. The most intense fighting has occurred during the past two days when the Viet Cong lost at least 222 dead.

2. The action is taking place in the area of a long-established Viet Cong stronghold known as War Zone "C" [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] there is some evidence that a substantial buildup of enemy forces may be under way. Air observers on 5 November sighted a convoy of 50 to 60 trucks on Highway 1 in Cambodian territory approaching the ATTLEBORO area. On 6 November there were sightings of three separate convoys in an area about 30 miles northeast of the battle. US air strikes have been called in to intercept these movements but no information is available at this time as to their effect.

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3. Twelve US battalions from the 1st Division, 25th Division and the 196th Infantry Brigade have been committed to the developing situation in Tay Ninh Province. USAF C-130s are using a temporary air strip four miles northwest of Tay Ninh city in a round-the-clock effort to bring in more men and equipment. As of 6 November, 236 air strikes had been flown in support of Operation ATTLEBORO and heavy artillery fire had been concentrated on bunkers where Communist forces were believed to be in hiding.

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4. On 5 November a Viet Cong force of unknown size attacked and overran a South Vietnamese post 85 miles southwest of Saigon. South Vietnamese casualties included seven Popular Force troops killed, two wounded, and 16 missing. In addition, 12 South Vietnamese civilians were killed and nine wounded.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Continuing political pressure on Premier Ky by southerners may soon force some changes in the current assignments of key northerners in the government, with police director Loan still the most likely to be affected. Although the unity of the seven southern-oriented dissident cabinet ministers has been split by the agreement of three to remain in the government, many other influential southerners both within and outside the government have recently expressed their dissatisfaction with the current situation in letters which are rapidly becoming public knowledge.

2. On 27 October, the executive committee of the Southern Old Students Association--a grouping of influential southerners headed by retired General Tran Van Don--sent a letter to Premier Ky and Chief of State Thieu which referred to the arrest of a subcabinet official in late September and to the subsequent resignation of several ministers from the cabinet. The letter stated that "the silence of competent authorities" in light of these developments has spread discontent, and it concluded by asking Ky and Thieu to resolve the situation in order "to save what still can be saved." The 24 members of the executive committee who signed the letter included Tran Van Don, Nguyen Van Loc, who is also president of the Peoples - Armed Forces Advisory Council, and Mai Tho Truyen, a prominent Buddhist lay leader who heads the Southern Buddhist Studies Association.

3. Twenty-six high-ranking government civil servants--almost all of whom are southerners--also sent a letter to Premier Ky on 27 October which stated that the arrest of the subcabinet official reflected disrespect for the basic rights of citizens. The officials concluded with a warning

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that if such acts were repeated, "we fear the total collapse of the departments under our supervision." Prominent signers included the director general of planning, the rector of the National Institute for Administration, the director general of post and telecommunications, the director general of foreign aid, the director general of the agricultural credit office, and the director of the Saigon hospital.

Involvement of the Peoples - Armed Forces Advisory Council

4. On 30 October, three of the dissident cabinet ministers--Youth Minister Trieu, Education Minister Truong, and Transport Minister Thuan, sent a letter to the Peoples - Armed Forces Advisory Council. They recounted developments surrounding the cabinet crisis and reaffirmed their resignations. These three ministers are apparently still awaiting replacements before leaving the cabinet, however. The letter was undoubtedly discussed in a special closed session of the council called on 5 November to review the progress of the council conciliation mission which has been under way since 19 October regarding the cabinet crisis.

5. No reports on the outcome of this meeting have been received as yet. The US Embassy believes it likely that the role of the council, which is composed of 59 appointed civilians and 20 military officers and whose purpose is to advise Premier Ky on various issues, will continue to be limited to conciliation attempts because of the high degree of government influence in the council. However, council president Nguyen Vin Loc, a southerner who signed the Old Students Association letter of 27 October, expected the session to be a stormy one, and he may try to arrange a meeting between Premier Ky and the council later this week.

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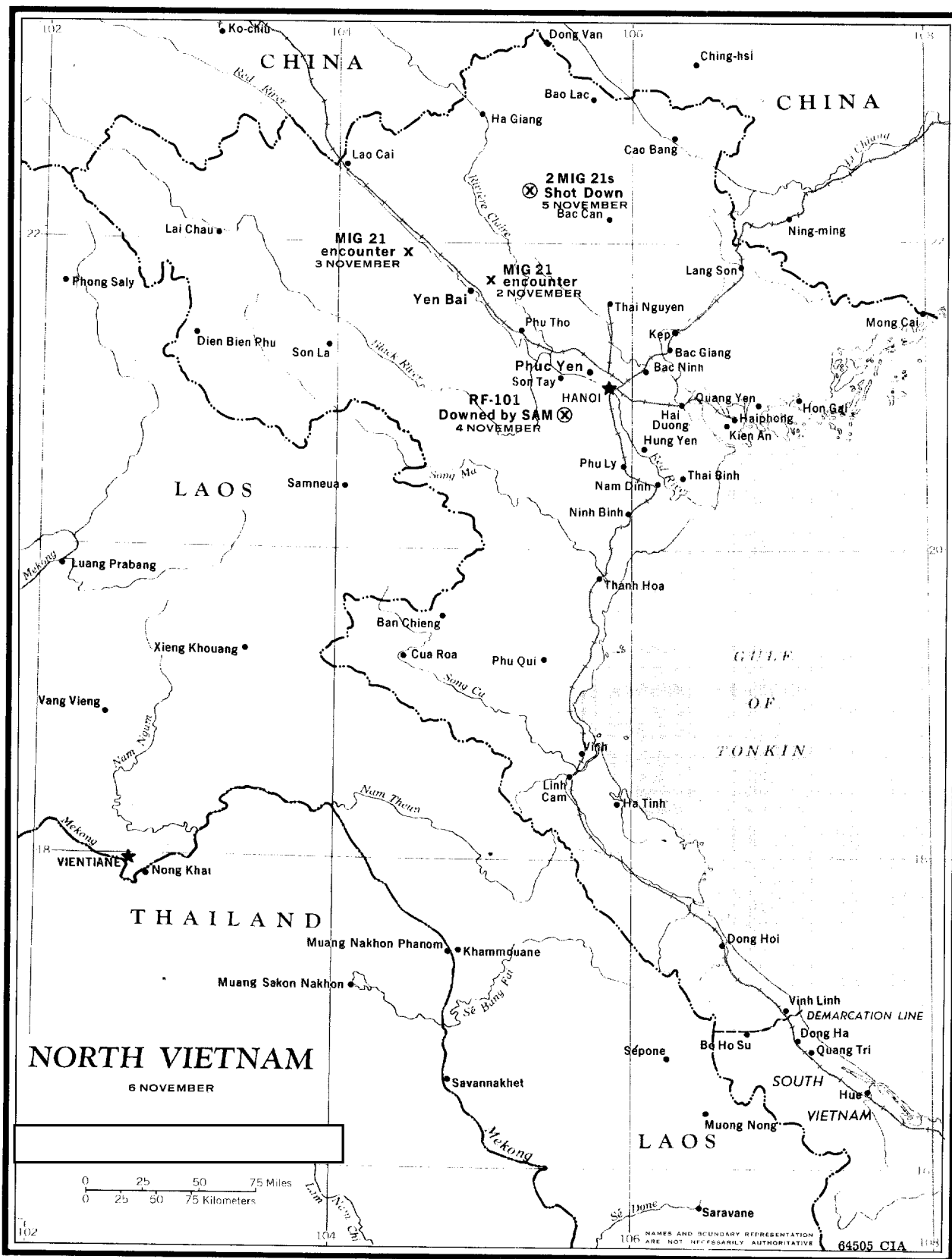
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III. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. Two North Vietnamese MIG-21 aircraft were shot down by US F-4C jets in an air engagement near Yen Bai on 5 November 1966. For the third time in four days the DRV air defense forces committed their most advanced fighters in an effort to down the USAF B-66 electronics countermeasure and reconnaissance planes which regularly patrol this area in support of US strike missions. In the previous encounters on 2 and 3 November no aircraft were lost on either side.

2. The returning US fighter pilots reported that four MIG-21s were involved in the attack and that at least one air-to-air missile was launched at the B-66 by the Communist planes. In the engagement that followed the lead USAF fighter fired two Sparrow missiles to divert the MIGs from their pass at the B-66 and then shot down the first MIG-21 with a third Sparrow. The Communist pilot was seen to eject. A second MIG-21 was brought down by an F-4C with a single Sidewinder heat-seeking missile which exploded in the MIGs tail.

3. The North Vietnamese aircraft involved in this encounter bore the same markings as those observed in the air engagement of 3 November with at least two red stripes on the wings and a green insignia near the jet intake. These planes have been tentatively identified as MIG-21 D fighters--an all-weather version of the Soviet-built interceptor, probably the most advanced aircraft in the DRV inventory. The unique markings observed on these planes may be indicative of their status as an elite force.

4. During the prolonged air battle the US planes came within 20 feet of the Communist fighters

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and were in a position to observe their armament with great detail. One of the returning pilots stated his conviction that one MIG-21 was carrying an AA-3 Anab missile--a type never before reported in North Vietnam. The AA-3 is one of the newest Soviet air weapons (operational 1965) and is a radar-homing missile with a warhead more than twice the size of the AA-1 Alkali now believed to be in the DRV inventory. The pilot's report appears to be unlikely in view of current estimates of the AA-3 which hold that this weapon is not compatible with the MIG-21.

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New Burst of SAM Activity

6. US pilots reported sighting 20 to 22 surface-to-air missiles fired while conducting strikes in the DRV on 4 November. One US aircraft, an RF-101 photoreconnaissance plane, is believed to have been lost to a SAM about 25 miles southwest of Hanoi. During the past two months the number of SA-2 firings has been in sharp decline as compared to the record activity in July and August. The number of launches this weekend is the highest since 4 September when 18 to 20 missiles were fired.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

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Additional Reports on Negotiation Prospects

4. Bulgarian Prime Minister Zhivkov in a 2 November conversation with a US Embassy official joined in the chorus of Eastern Europeans who have recently been insisting that if the bombing of North Vietnam ceases, negotiations will begin. This common effort appears to have been agreed upon at the recent Moscow meeting of bloc party leaders. The

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5. Thus far, none of the Eastern European diplomats who have contacted the US on this subject have offered any good evidence that they are speaking with the authorization of Hanoi. Moreover, Polish Foreign Minister Rapacki is reported to have told Polish journalists last week that there is no way of guaranteeing a favorable Hanoi response to a cessation of US bombing, although he went on to state that the Poles thought there was "good reason" to expect such a result.

6. There has been no change in Hanoi's publicly stated terms for a negotiated settlement of the war, nor has there been any indication that Hanoi is encouraging efforts by its friends to suggest the North Vietnamese are willing now to enter into negotiations in return for an end to the bombings. Hanoi radio on 30 October suggested just the opposite when it repeated a statement made by Ho Chi Minh in August chiding "some people of good will," who were "deceived by US propaganda," and were advising the North Vietnamese to "negotiate with the aggressors at all costs."

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